

# Better Homes and Centers



Michigan Department of  
Social Services

Competition

Issue 25 Summer 1990

## IN CONSIDERATION OF PARENTS

*Gail McDonald, Paraprofessional Infant Room  
Mt. Pleasant Public Schools Day Care*

Ideally, each baby would be born into a home that would be able to meet every emotional, physical, spiritual and mental need in order to allow him to thrive and grow into a healthy child. Realistically, in today's society the majority of babies will need to receive care outside the home in a variety of child care settings. I believe that there isn't any reason why we can't provide each baby quality, loving, nurturing care and we should never settle for anything less. However, putting this belief into action on a daily basis in an Infant Room located in a busy day care center presents an exciting challenge.

The Mt. Pleasant Schools Day Care uses a primary caregiver system in order to provide babies with the best environment. A primary caregiver provides all the basic needs for her babies such as feedings, diaper changes, naps and filling out the daily log. She works with the baby's family in order to set up consistent care between the home and school and follows the schedule the parents want for their child. It is a professional challenge and hard work to carry out 12 individual routines at the same time but we have an excellent staff that works together in order to accomplish this daily balancing routine. Each primary caregiver is assigned three specific babies for her care but all caregivers work with all babies to provide a stimulating, loving and nurturing environment.

It is difficult to keep in balance all the close relationships involved in child care. There is a tendency for some primary caregivers to build invisible barriers between themselves and the parents, or between themselves and other staff members in an unspoken competition over the care of "their" babies. We recently implemented a policy that staff members in the Infant Room also are mothers which seems to eliminate the competition. It is important that each baby's needs are top priority and nothing must be allowed to interfere or interrupt his growth and opportunity to thrive.

The following are some other techniques that we use

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## DIRECTOR'S CORNER

My son played competitive sports during his high school years. He played the traditional team sports such as football and participated in field and track events. I found it interesting that he seemed to enjoy the field and track activities more than the traditional team sports. The individual field and track events constantly challenged him to better his own personal scores through practice and modifying his technique. In essence, he seemed to be in competition with himself to better his previous levels of performance. Through it all, the team also benefited.

It occurred to me that licensed child care providers perform in much the same way through becoming accredited. For example, the National Association for the Education of Young Children administers a national accreditation system for child care centers. The National Association for Family Day Care accredits family and group day care homes. These "self-improvement" processes challenge child care facilities to achieve higher levels of performance. This self-focused competition can be self-satisfying for you as providers; and by improving the quality of child care it benefits children in care, parents of those children and society as a whole.

The phrase, "be the best you can be," applies to all of us, and is particularly important when caring for vulnerable children. Be in competition with yourself to provide the highest quality child care possible. Then everyone wins!

Sincerely,

Ted deWolf, Director  
Division of Child Day Care Licensing



## PARENTS . . .

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in our program to insure the "best for baby":

1. Greet each parent as she enters the room in order to build a positive environment and encourage open communications.
2. Ask open-ended questions about the baby. LISTEN carefully to the nonverbal response from Mom and Dad as well as the verbal.
3. Support parents by using strong eye contact. Be respectful and courteous. Follow each baby's individual schedule (even if you don't necessarily agree as long as the request does not violate a State/Center policy.)
4. Provide developmental information in a positive manner. Always reassure Mom's knowledge about her child.
5. Keep daily logs, diaper changes, feedings, naps and a short summary of baby's day. This is an excellent place to include the parents in the day's activities. For example, "Thanks Mom for my lunch today. I liked everything even though I spit out the red beets."



6. Our personal room viewpoint is not to "see" any firsts for baby. These milestones should be shared with the family first, for example, baby's first tooth, crawling, walking, or first word. Bring it to their attention in a subtle way such as commenting on the way "Andrew seems to be chewing so much today." When Mom mentions the first tooth, then we can be happy together.
7. In getting parents to comply with our health policy, it's often easier to approach the problem from baby's point of view, such as "Billy seems so congested, he is so miserable." In this way you lead them to same conclusion that you have reached. Then it is time to remind them of the health policy.
8. Greet parents at their pick-up time and have the baby ready to go. Our center has windows looking over the parking lot, so it's great to be holding the

baby at the window waving a greeting for Mom. Tell him, "Look, your Mom is here" telling Mom that we had a good day, but missed her and hope her day was O.K. Each parent needs to be greeted by the primary caregiver for her child. Baby and parent need to have a few moments to greet each other after a long day. Instead of holding the baby in toward yourself, try holding the baby out to the parent, saying "Hi Mom" to reinforce the baby and parent relationship.

9. Parents become part of our "extended family" and caregivers sometimes learn very personal information about the family, marriage, job, or other personal information. Confidences should never turn into gossip or be repeated to other staff, or anyone outside the center. Confidences should be kept. Do not betray a parent's trust.

Transitions from one room to another are often a difficult time for the primary caregiver, the family and sometimes even the baby. We may not particularly like this part of the job, but it is essential to ensure the best for baby. The following helps to prepare for the transition:

1. About a month before the baby is going to make a room change, write on the daily log occasional comments about how many new skills the baby has learned; how he can do so many new things; how proud you are of the baby; and how the baby is showing interest in new things.
2. About 2 weeks before the room change, start short visits with the primary caregiver and baby. This is also a good time to start getting to know the new caregiver. Include your visit and how it went on the daily log.
3. The two caregivers should talk about how to help baby make the transition. It's an easy trap to fall into feeling that the next caregiver won't love and care for baby as well as you do. Don't act on these negative feelings because it's emotionally healthy for the baby to ease over to the next caregiver, and it's equally important for the family to make a transition as well.
4. The first two or three weeks in the new room might be difficult. It has been our experience that often the change is harder for parents and caregivers than for baby.
5. Continue to say "Hi" to the parents. Reassure them that even though transitions aren't always easy, everyone is working hard to make this one a good experience for the baby. Keep your visits in the next room brief, but always hug your "graduate" and reassure the child. Interest him in some new toy or activity and pass him over to the new caregiver.

Primary caregivers invest weeks and even months with a baby and his family and it is not easy "turning over" the little one to another caregiver but, a smooth change is best for all concerned. This makes you ready to turn to a new baby and face the challenge and opportunity of making a positive difference in the life of another child.

# WHO CAN BE THE FIRST ONE TO ... ?

*Elaine Williams, Assistant Coordinator  
Lifelong Education, Human Ecology  
Michigan State University*

Who can be first to finish their picture, put on their coat, eat their snack...? Who can run the fastest? Who has the best paper, the neatest cubby?

We often hear these words in child care settings. Well-meaning caregivers and parents often say these things hoping to encourage children to complete some activity faster so that they may be on their way to another activity. Do these words encourage or discourage children?

Whenever a situation is set up to see who can be first, it means that everyone else is last because the only criterion established was to be first. Children who are seldom first may begin to feel that they are not able to succeed and stop even trying to meet the goal.

Children below the age of seven are still in the egocentric stage of their lives; they still look at the world from their own perspective. When a caregiver says to a group of young children, "You ALL did a very good job at clean up time!" she may be met with questions of "Me too? Me too?" because the children don't really understand yet that they EACH are part of the group.

The classroom or group setting is not the only place that this push to succeed appears. Competition is being introduced at earlier ages on the playground as well. Children are being introduced to competitive and team sports before they are able to understand the idea of belonging to a group. Team sports, relay races and competitive games are inappropriate for young children below third grade.

There are several reasons for this. First, the children are still focused on themselves as individuals and don't understand what it means to work together to win a game. Secondly, they seldom have the physical dexterity to accomplish some of the ball handling and coordination tasks required in a relay game. Therefore, they will not feel very successful. If a game is supposed to be FUN, and children do not feel successful when they participate it is unlikely that they will want to continue or try again. Third, in most relay games and some team sports, only one child is active or participating at a time and the others are waiting. Anyone who has worked with young children is very aware that waiting is NOT one of things they do best! This alone should be reason enough to eliminate competitive activities from your program.

Our culture seems to encourage competition all around us. Car rental companies "try harder" because they are second; soft drink products and fast food chains continually tell us that they are the best and sports teams announce that they are #1. It is not surprising then that competition has entered the realm

of child care as well.

At the recent MIAEYC conference, Dr. Ellen Galinsky, NAEYC President, talked about helping children get ready for the next century. She spoke about the qualities that would be most important for the future. The ability to work with other people, or cooperation, was one of the two most important qualities she mentioned. (The second quality was the ability to learn how to learn.) Dr. Galinsky stated that in the future, we must compete against ourselves to do our best and not compete with others. Workers in the 21st century will have to work in teams to solve problems. She went on to say that children learn these skills mainly between the ages of two and six — the time when most of them are in our care.

Let's look at some ways to make the child care setting less competitive and to help our children prepare for the 21st century.

First, let's abandon all team and relay games until at least third grade! Through the years and across many cultures, most children begin organized play with group or circle games. Think back to the games of your childhood summer days, or perhaps early evenings after supper when you went out to play with your neighborhood friends. You probably remember playing *Ring Around the Rosey*, *London Bridge*, *Farmer in the Dell*, *Motor Boat*, *A Tisket a Tasket* and many other circle games. Circle games permit ALL children to participate in the activity even if it is only by holding hands and walking in a circle and they require little in the way of advanced motor skills, such as throwing, hitting or kicking a ball. Not only do ALL children get to do something but no one person becomes the star.

Next, let's stop setting up competition between children with our statements of "who can be first to ... ?" Instead make statements that help children improve their personal performance. Also help children set their own levels of performance, not meet those of adults. Statements like "Show me how well you can tie your shoe, jump over the block, or run," permit children to set their own standards.

Another way to discourage competition, is to ENCOURAGE cooperation. I recall once in my teaching



that the children had had several rough days in which there was a large amount of bickering and generalized fussiness. I mentioned this to a friend who came to my

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## PLANTING THE SEEDS OF COOPERATION

*Pam Wisniewski  
Child Services Coordinator  
Grand Haven Community Education*

"Pick me, pick me" "I want to be first in line" "Am I the best?" "Who's the prettiest one here?" These words overheard in almost any preschool classroom, day care center or home day care especially at the beginning of the school year tell us that competition, vying with others for profit, prize or position, takes root early in life. On the other hand, statements such as "Let's all take turns being first," "We're each good at different things," "Let's work together on the project" or "I think we all look very nice today" speak of cooperation working together toward the common good. The difference is that competition is innate — "survival of the fittest." Cooperation must be learned through positive experiences.

If a sense of competition already comes to a center with each child, shouldn't we, as early educators, strive to plant the seeds of cooperation and carefully cultivate them among the children in our care?

During the preschool years teachers and caregivers use many games to introduce and reinforce basic skills. It may seem surprising that "games," which usually calls to mind an image of competition, are an excellent means of promoting a spirit of cooperation. With some games this can be accomplished by the attitude the teacher takes when the game is new to the group. Some traditional games may be used if winning is totally down-played, but taking turns and following directions are stressed. Here are some examples of this:

### Farmer in the Dell

When the cheese stands alone, children and teachers clap and chant "hurrah for the cheese" and the cheese becomes the new farmer. The teacher can encourage cooperation here by making a rule that only a child who hasn't had a turn may be chosen — stressing taking turns. Everyone has fun this way. If time doesn't permit everyone having a turn on a given day, a chart can be made and the game continued on subsequent days until each one has been the cheese/farmer.

## Doggie, Doggie, Where's Your Bone

Can be varied with season, e.g. "Witch, Witch, Where's Your Broom," "Santa, Santa, Where's your Reindeer."

Children sit in lines pretzel-style facing the back of a small chair. A child is chosen to sit in the chair with eyes closed. The object (bone, broom, reindeer, etc.) is placed under the chair. The leader taps one child on the head, who is to tiptoe and take the object back to his place and hide it behind his back. All children are



directed to place hands behind backs. The chant, "Doggie, Doggie, where's your bone, etc." is said. Then the "it" child turns around and is given three guesses to find out who has it. Cooperation comes in if the child doesn't guess and someone else helps her. No penalty is given. The leader makes sure everyone has a chance, and each child is praised and made to feel an important part of the group.

Another game where everyone has fun and nobody wins is "Circle Dodge Ball." The players form a circle, with one player in the center. The players roll the ball toward the feet of the person. The center person tries to keep from getting hit. When a player hits the center person's feet, they trade places. The leader supervises the location of the ball and, to foster cooperation, encourages a frequent roller to pass the ball to a neighbor who hasn't been in the center.

In the games described the attitude of the leader definitely has the effect of de-emphasizing competition and fostering cooperation among the players. While these games are adaptations of old favorites, the following are some games that are specifically designed to promote cooperation:

## Round and Round the Village

Children form a circle with one child walking around the outside. All chant "Let's go round and round the village, round and round the village, round and round the village as we have done before." Then the group chants, "go in and out the windows, go in and out the windows, go in and out the windows as we have done before." During this, the "it" child goes in between each two children, who raise their joined hands to let her in and out. Next, all chant "stand and face a partner, stand and face a partner, stand and face a

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partner as we have done before." The "it" child does this and the chosen child follows her around the circle repeating the game until the circle disappears and all have joined the line.

### Pass the Hoop

This is a simple game of cooperation. A circle is formed. A hula hoop must be passed from one child to another all the way around the circle without using hands. Arms, heads, feet, etc. may be used. There are lots of laughs with this one.



### Line Switch

The group is divided into two teams. On a paved area, a line of squares is drawn with chalk, one square for each player with a space of free squares between the two groups of squares. The object is to have all the players on the other side. One player stands in each square and may begin moving when the leader yells "line switch." One at a time, each player moves forward into an empty square, the free square, or move around an occupied space to a free one. Only one player is allowed per square. When the teams have completely switched, the game is over. This can be done indoors with squares taped on the floor. Everybody wins!

### Partner Stunts

1. Sit on the floor back to back. Try to get up with arms linked at elbows.



2. Wheelbarrow.
3. Sit down in front of partner, legs outstretched in front (straddled), lean over gripping wrists and try to pull each other over on top of self.
4. Stand facing each other on each side of a line, place palms together and on a signal, try to push partner back so you can cross line.
5. Centipede — One child gets on hands and knees, other must stand over head and shoulders (straddling), then places hands down on floor in front of him and bends legs back, balancing them on the back of his partner. Walk!
6. Leg Balances — Stand back to back. Bend same leg at knee, grasp each other's ankles, hop around in circle.
7. Face each other, extend leg forward, grasp ankle and hop around.

Partner stunts are yet another way to nurture the budding sprouts of cooperation. This can lead to a "partner day" with all kinds of cooperative activities, e.g., puzzle races (stressing teams working together, not how fast they can finish), helping each other with paint shirts, inkblot pictures or murals done together. The list is endless. Most of the games and activities mentioned here can be adapted for younger or older children. Our school-age children love "Circle Dodge Ball."

Since it is through the caregiver's efforts that a sense of cooperation will bud and blossom, she should never lose sight of each child's individuality in the shuffle. Every youngster must first know that she is truly worthwhile before she can be a valuable working member of a cooperative group. Thus, the caregiver's primary goal is to help children realize their individual, special gifts to help each other in group situations.

Competition surely has its place in our society. But I believe that children who have good self-esteem and have learned cooperation at an early age will make better citizens in the long run. When they do choose to compete, youngsters so trained, will give a new and kinder dimension to the word "competition."



# ***On Shooting Ourselves in the Foot*** **#1 – SHOOT-OUT AT THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CORRAL**

*Bettye M. Caldwell*  
*Professor of Education*  
*University of Arkansas at Little Rock*

Most of the people I know in early childhood are friendly and peace-loving, utterly dedicated to nonviolent conflict resolution. However, this life philosophy apparently does not preclude many of us from wielding guns on occasion — or so I judge from the Swiss cheese appearance of our feet these days. By that I mean that our feet are full of holes, and we seem to be doing most of the shooting ourselves.

I have been in this field for 25 years now, and everything that happens I look at through the perspective of that history. Younger readers will simply have to forgive me for that habit. I know how far we have come during that time. From a tiny group of little old ladies in navy sneakers who know a hundred ways to keep little children from doing something without ever once saying “No” or “Don’t do that,” we have grown into a legion of women (and a few good men) in Nikes and Reeboks and Ferragamos who call a few members of Congress by their names and whose opinions are sought as national policy is formulated and promulgated. We have been discovered by the corporate world and are heralded as offering society’s main hope for eliminating poverty and dependence, for preventing school dropouts and juvenile delinquency. And, perhaps most important of all from the standpoint of proof of status and recognition, the field of “real” education — i.e., that designed for children six years and older — has at last embraced us as a legitimate member of the family, not the offspring of some disparaged relative whose own lineage was suspect. These days we should be able to stand tall and walk proud. Unfortunately, we have trouble standing up straight and walking at all — proudly or humbly — as our feet are so full of holes.

But I have worked my foot-shooting metaphor too long and should perhaps get on with my message. That message is that I am deeply concerned about the continuing shrillness of our criticisms of steps being taken by public education to endorse and embrace early childhood as a valid and essential part of education, broadly defined as an effort to enhance the common weal. Everywhere I go this is being done — even at a conference of religious educators at which I recently spoke. What concerns me is that efforts to let us into the club of legitimacy are not being interpreted as long overdue recognition and acceptance but as attempts to wipe us out. To mix metaphors, we don’t seem to see this busy market activity as heralding

a possible stock split that will double our share of ownership of the corporation but rather as a signal of an imminent hostile takeover.

Fears are expressed that early childhood professionals will not be consulted, or their opinions heeded, as programs are designed and operated. “They” are going to tell the early childhood people what to do. “They” are going to mandate how “we” teach young children. Translated into specifics, that means a fear that a developmentally inappropriate curriculum will be imposed on the children and that young children will have to sit at desks and fill in ditto sheets and workbooks all day.

Although such fears could certainly be valid, there is considerable evidence that they are exaggerated. Across the land there is a spirit of cooperation that is very heartwarming. At the time of writing this editorial, I have just returned from a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, that typifies this commitment to sharing ideas and pooling the efforts of everyone involved in the early childhood enterprise. An advocacy group called Action for Children, Columbus Association for the Education of Young Children, and the Franklin County Educational Council put together the Public School Involvement in Child care Steering Committee. All parties — those that represent what we have traditionally called early childhood education, those that represent child care, and those that represent the public schools — are working collaboratively to ensure that the programs that emerge will be based on input from all groups that have a contribution to make to a quality service.

This same sort of cooperative venture can be found all over the country. Many state departments of education now have early childhood curriculum specialists. In fact, this group now has an organization with a very long name, the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education. I know that these individuals and groups are soliciting input from early childhood personnel, as I have personally been asked to critique the plans developed by five different states. Even on the basis of such a small sample, I am willing to wager that others, better qualified than I am, have done the same thing in the other 45 states.

In spite of these gestures of humility, sincerity, and affiliativeness, personnel representing early childhood often react with defensiveness and hostility. “The schools have ruined the big children, and now they want to ruin the little children.” (Really sincere early childhood people never call little children “kids.”) What a familiar ring that has to it! I well remember being asked to debate this issue at an NAEYC meeting about 15 years ago. It was the year in which Albert Shanker had terrified the field by suggesting that early childhood education should be offered in public schools because there was a surplus of elementary teachers who needed jobs! A terrifying suggestion indeed, but by no means grounds for indicting efforts to put high quality early

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## SHOOT OUT...

childhood programs in public school settings. I was at that time the director of such a school and knew that it could be done.

Then, moving ahead ten years, I was president of NAYEC when Gordon Ambach, then Commissioner of Education for the state of New York, proposed education for all four year olds in the schools. People from all over the country called me, moaning something like "Bettye, we've got to do something to stop this." Naively thinking that such a proposal was a true shot in the arm (not in the foot) for early childhood, I was so completely bewildered by this response that I hardly knew how to respond. Here we had been proclaiming the importance of our work for 20 years, implying that a quality early childhood experience was essential for complete development of the human potential. Furthermore, we had proclaimed that we knew how to provide such an experience. Then along came an important public official proclaiming the same thing, even urging public support for funding of such a program, and we protested vociferously. We ran like scared rabbits, filling the air and our feet with buckshot as we ran.

But I jest. I was not really bewildered at the reaction. I knew that the real fear was that "they" were going to move the first grade down to kindergarten, kindergarten down to the four's, and on and on into the womb and possibly the ovaries! "We" and "they" thinking ruled the day; belief in a unified "us" was rare — and tentative when it did exist.

Today the game goes on, only we use different verbal weapons. We worry less about running than pushing. The bugbear is now "formal instruction" (meaning essentially workbooks and ditto sheets), and the holy grail is developmental appropriateness. And to drink from it does not even require the leap of faith demanded of Indiana Jones in his latest escapade.

If I sound cynical, let me hasten to offer reassurance that I am not in the least. In fact, I am incredibly optimistic. That is not hard, as there are favorable omens everywhere. The powerful and wonderful Ed Zigler, long an opponent of early childhood programs in the public schools (at least according to my interpretation of some of the remarks he has made over the years), has come to endorse the idea, albeit with reservations.

His reservations represent a bit of what I see as foot-shooting, though with rice rather than buckshot. He does not want to see the regular school day and year for young children lengthened to provide what I call *educare* — education and child care integrated in such a way as to produce both services in the same setting in a way that meets children's needs for appropriate developmental stimulation and support and parents' needs for longer supervision of their children to accommodate family work schedules. He seems to fear



that such an extension/modification will merely encourage certified teachers to devote more time to formal instruction and would prefer to have certified teachers responsible for the children no more than half of a given child's day. At that time, more developmentally oriented CDAs would take charge for the other half day. In my way of thinking, this sort of arrangement scatters a bit of unnecessary buckshot, but the holes are small enough to cover with a band aid. They will not immobilize us.

My plea is that we put away our guns and become once again peace-loving citizens who practice in our professional lives what we try to teach by our own behavior in our work the children: *to trust one another, to get along with one another and work out differences amicably, to accept people a little bit different from ourselves, to demonstrate our awareness that other individuals and groups can also love and care about children, and to feel good enough about ourselves that we expect the rest of the world to feel the same way.* Such actions would be incredibly good for our feet.

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# KEEPING TRACK

Constance Macek, Director  
Child Care Services

Pinconning Area Adult and Community Education

*[Editor's note: Testing young children can be a form of competition in which children are measured against some standard which may or may not be appropriate. However, ongoing assessment or "keeping track" of children's progress is necessary for accountability and is an integral part of developmentally appropriate programs. This is the way one early childhood program meets this challenge.]*

In our preschool program, there is a certified lead teacher with the early childhood (Z.A.) endorsement and two para-professional aides, one with training in elementary education and one with training in early childhood education. All three are viewed as teachers by children and parents alike. In order to adequately assess and keep track of children's gains, we have developed the following format.

## Interview Assessment

We interview each parent when the child enters our preschool program to learn how the child is developing and what the parent considers strengths and weaknesses. The child accompanies the parent and plays in the room while we confer. Enrollment records are completed at this time and any special needs, concerns or pertinent medical information are noted.

The children enjoy visiting the preschool with their parent. They are not asked any assessment questions. They are free to play in the room, sit on the parent's lap, or talk with the parent and/or teacher if they wish.

## Classroom Observations

One week after the start of preschool, we make anecdotal notes on each child's adjustment to the program. We begin to familiarize ourselves with individual children, and make primary caregiver assignments.

In every session, seven children are assigned to each staff member. While a staff member could record observations regarding any child, it is her responsibility to see that each of "her" seven children has an observation entered in the record every week. Notes are made on "post-it notes" which include the date and time and the signature of the staff member recording the information. These notes are then transferred to the child's individual folder.

Information in the folder may include:

- systematic observations of how children perform tasks such as setting the table for snack;
- dated artwork or invented writing samples;
- anecdotes such as problem solving with materials in the classroom;
- notes on spontaneous interactions with others, such as conflict resolutions during freeplay;
- observations of participation in group activities like games, storytime, or playground activities;

- records of self-help skills like toileting, personal hygiene, and competence with personal belongings (shoes, wraps, bookbags).

Both the language and content of the observation are as descriptive as possible.

## Home Visit Notes

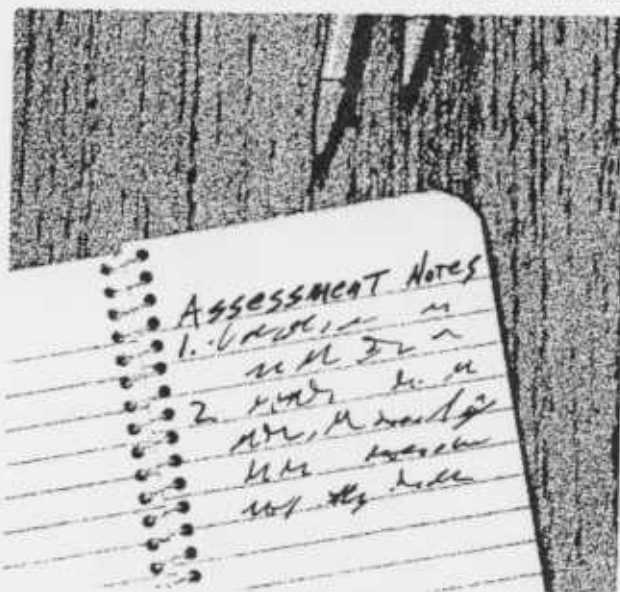
We make home visits periodically during the school year by appointment and at the parent's convenience. We review the child's folder prior to the visit, and discuss the results with the parent. We maintain a home visit card file in which we record the content and outcome of each home visit. These visits are of great help in structuring activities to involve parents and children at school.

## Individual Child Folders

In addition to the enrollment records, anecdotal notes, and periodic dated samples of drawings, writing, and other products, these folders include photographs of the child at play in preschool. These samplings convey the day-to-day changes and involvement of the child in the preschool environment. This collection of primary data is descriptive, affirming, and sequential. It does, however, need to be reviewed and interpreted.

## Teacher Review

The teacher reviews the children's folders periodically, and adds notes regarding interests, school adjustments, and gains the child may be making. There is



nothing new added during this review phase. These records are then used for home visits, conferences and year-end reports.

## Readiness Inventory

We also include a readiness inventory of basic skills in the child's file and pass this on to the kindergarten teacher. The inventory assesses hand dominance, eight

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## KEEPING TRACK...

basic colors, six basic shapes, four gross motor skills, three fine motor skills and language development. All of these items are observed during play and are recorded systematically on a form devised for this purpose.

### Outcomes

We are pleased with this method of keeping track of children's progress. It stresses what a child has learned, and is helpful in determining what has been retained and used by the child. It allows us to consider the goals of our program, the skill level of the individual child and all domains of learning. In particular, we feel it addresses the development of higher order thinking skills, which is a goal of our program.

Our assessment method does not situate the child at a table with pencil in hand. It does require that we be conscientious in our observations of the child and thorough in our reporting of advances in the child's

growth. This kind of assessment is administered on a day-to-day basis, during naturally occurring activities, by adults familiar with the child. Perhaps the most gratifying result of this assessment method is the confidence shown by early childhood staff members when discussing a child with individual parents.

Keeping track is based on an assumption of success for each and every child, and is descriptive rather than judgmental. It provides an account of what happens and how, rather than what should have happened. It also has these advantages:

- It provides assurance to parents that the child is making progress and that the abilities and special qualities which make the child an individual are appreciated.
- It supplies valuable feedback on how and what children are learning, and enables the teacher to plan curriculum.
- In summary form, it demonstrates the program's benefits for children to administrators and the wider community.

## WHO CAN BE FIRST...

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room. She looked at the toys I had set out and commented that I had out lots of individual toys, things that only one child at a time could use. She suggested that the selection of toys in the room might be contributing to the problems. The children had few materials to play with together and spent much time arguing over who had IT first. The next day, I added more cooperative toys, enlarged the dramatic play area, and called attention to the blocks and other building materials where several children could play at the same time. I found that the changes did help.

While we know that young children are not ready to share in many areas, caregivers can begin to model how to go about sharing when they enter into play with the children. The caregiver might select a toy that typically only one child at a time can use such as a puzzle or shape box. The caregiver can put in the first piece and ask the child to put in the next piece. This gives the opportunity for the caregiver to say to the child, "we are sharing" or "This is cooperation."

Using the principles of providing appropriate group games, encouraging cooperative play and eliminating our statements of "who can be first" will enable us to say "These children are learning how to play together — and cooperate!" We will have the satisfaction of knowing that we have helped them prepare for the future.

## KID'S SPORTS SHOULD URGE GROWTH

**(Remember Mom & Dad!)**

He's just a little boy, he stands at the plate; with his heart pounding fast; the bases are loaded; the die has been cast. Mom and Dad cannot help him; he stands all alone. A hit at this moment would send the team home. The ball nears the plate; he swings and he misses. There's a groan from the crowd, with some boos and hisses. A thoughtless voice cries, "Strike out the bum!" Tears fill his eyes the game's no longer fun. Remember — he's just a little boy who stands all alone. So open your heart and give him a break, for it's moments like this a man you can make. Keep this in mind when you hear someone forget, he's just a little boy, not a man yet.

*Author Unknown*

*Posted at the Grand Rapids  
Child Guidance Clinic*

# QUALITY CHILD CARE: ACCREDITATION

The National Association for Family Day Care is a professional organization representing family and group home child care providers throughout the United States. The purpose of NAFDC is to serve as a national voice and networking system for family day care.

The National Association for Family Day Care accredits family day care homes that offer high-quality child care services. The purpose of the *Accreditation* is to offer professional recognition and consumer distinction to those providers who meet these high standards of quality child care through their consistency and dedication.

The *Accreditation* is intended for those providers who do not only meet the child care standards defined by state licensing and registration agencies, but have demonstrated a commitment to reach beyond these minimum requirements to achieve standards of excellence.

Seven dimensions of child care are assessed:

- Indoor Safety
- Health
- Nutrition
- Interacting
- Indoor Play Environment
- Outdoor Play Environment
- Professional Responsibility

## Accreditation Eligibility and Process

- Must be currently caring for children as a family day care provider as the primary caregiver in his or her own home for a minimum of 18 months.
- Must meet state regulatory requirements and submit documentation at time of application.

Process includes provider self-assessment validated by two outside individuals.

Cost of *Accreditation* is \$150 for members, payable in two installments.

For more information on the *Accreditation*, contact:

National Association for Family Day Care  
725 Fifteen St. N.W., Suite 505  
Washington, DC 20005  
(202) 347-3356  
(800) 359-3817

## CONTRATULATIONS TO NAFDC ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

Karen Rast, Holland  
Annie Smith, Albion  
Kathryn Spitzley, Holland  
Kathleen Wright, Ann Arbor

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

*Ted deWolf, Director  
Child Day Care Licensing Division*

I was sitting at my desk recently, contemplating what Michigan's child care system is really all about; thinking, "where are we as a *corporate body* — parents, providers, government, neighbors, and community?" As I thought, a number of questions entered my mind which I will share with you. These questions are not really difficult to answer, but they do occupy our thoughts from time to time and we need to consider their relevance to child care as we go through the list. For some of you this may not make any sense at all. For me, I just had to be reminded and wanted to share my thoughts with you.

- Do children really matter?
- Do we do to others as has been done to us?
- Are we kind when others are unkind to us?
- Do we smile when others frown and scowl at us?
- Are we what we eat?
- Do we love when we are unloved?

- Do we care if we are not cared for?
- Do we have compassion for others when we have never experienced someones else's compassion for us?
- Do we become what we experience?

What if we find little ones who have no one who cares, are treated unkindly, and are unloved? What do they become? The answer, which is clear to me, is that our correctional facilities are full of them.

You can make a difference. Existing research has proven that to me, you as child care providers have a dramatic impact on the lives of children with long-lasting, positive effects. Some — perhaps most of those effects — you will never know about. Your time with children is often so short but your impact can and does live on. Make that time you have with these little ones in your care meaningful, stimulating and loving so that they in turn can do the same to others around them as they grow. Think about it.

# RESOURCES — COMPETITION



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## RIGHT FROM THE START

*National Association of State Boards  
of Education (1988)*

The legitimate concern about the link between our economic future and the quality of schooling has fostered a competitive mentality for our educational enterprise, with unfortunate consequences for early segments of schooling. If education is seen as a contest that pits children against their peers, or a race against our foreign competitors, we risk teaching very young children the wrong academic tasks in an inappropriate fashion before they are ready, and we stimulate fears and pressure among parents.

... Thinking in young children is directly tied to their interactions with people and materials. Young children learn best and most by actively exploring their environment, using hands-on materials and building upon their natural curiosity and desire to make sense of the world around them.

Please send articles for consideration in future issues to:

Better Homes and Centers  
Div. of Child Day Care Licensing  
Ingham County Dept. of Social Services  
5303 S. Cedar St.  
Lansing, Michigan 48911

### EDITORIAL STAFF

Tina Marks.....	Home Licensing Consultant
Sue Young.....	Home Licensing Consultant
Sandra Settergren.	Home Licensing Consultant
Carole Grates ....	Center Licensing Consultant
Patricia Hearron .	Center Licensing Consultant
Judy Levine.....	Licensing Supervisor

# PROVIDER'S CORNER



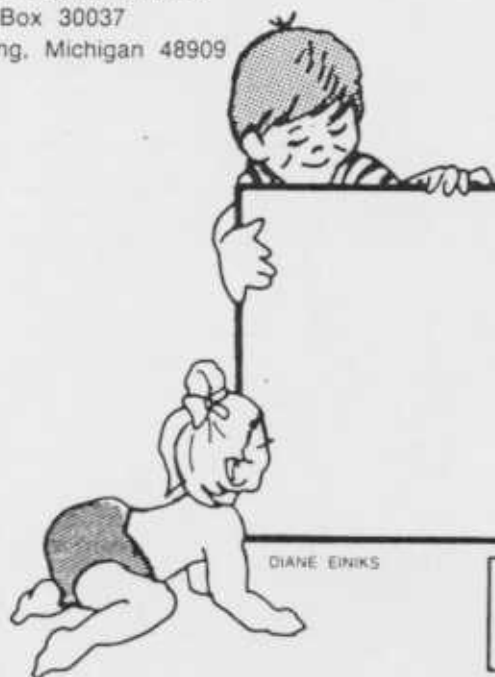
We have had a number of complaints which deal with inappropriate staffing and supervision, particularly in family and group day care homes. It seems that for other than emergency reasons providers have left day care children temporarily with adults who are strangers to the parents and sometimes even to the children. Undoubtedly there are times when a substitute caregiver is necessary and unavoidable. However, please anticipate these instances and take the time to introduce parents to people who may from time to time be responsible for their children. When it comes to child care, the fewer surprises for parents, the happier everyone will be.

A related issue that surfaces occasionally is parents' complaints that teenage boys or husbands should not be responsible for their children's care. The department requires that a responsible adult (at least 18 years of age) provide direct care and supervision of children at all times. I would encourage you to discuss all assistant- and substitute-care arrangements with parents so that they know what your plan is. If your plan includes using certain family members, this gives the parents the opportunity to tell you how they feel about that.

Finally, do not cut corners by having insufficient or underage staff. Not only is this a violation of promulgated rules, it also puts day care children in jeopardy. Adhering to the rules will help to reduce risks to young, vulnerable children and provide them with an environment that will stimulate their positive growth and development. This is, after all, what child care is all about.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
Bureau of Regulatory Services  
300 S. Capitol Avenue  
P.O. Box 30037  
Lansing, Michigan 48909

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A Business Conference  
for  
Child Care Providers

Friday, Oct. 5  
and  
Saturday, Oct. 6  
Oakland University  
Rochester, Michigan  
Register for one (\$15.00) or both days (\$25.00).  
for more information call Marilyn Rudzinski  
Extension Home Economist  
Conference Chair at (313) 469-6430.